

Brexit done: UK leaves EU as Boris Johnson hails new dawn

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London: The UK's divorce from the European Union (EU) came into force on Friday night as it became the first country to exit the economic bloc after 47 years of membership following the vote in favour of Brexit in June 2016.

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Brexit came into force at 11:00 pm (2300 GMT).

"This is the moment when the dawn breaks and the curtain goes up on a new act in our great national drama," said Johnson, in his video message which promised hope and opportunity to every part of the United Kingdom.

"It is not just about some legal extrication. It is potentially a moment of real national renewal and change. This is the dawn of a new era in which we no longer accept that your life chances or your family's life chances should depend on which part of the country you grow up in," he said.

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Johnson was keen to highlight his vision of a friendly negotiation process for both sides to thrash out a new trading relationship as the beginning of a "new era of friendly cooperation" between the EU and an energetic Britain.

Celebrating the UK's "recaptured sovereignty" to deliver the changes the June 2016 referendum vote signified, he noted, "Whether that is by controlling immigration or creating freeports or liberating our fishing industry or doing free trade deals is the right and healthy and democratic thing to do."

On a critical note on the EU's evolution over the period of the UK's membership, he added, "Because for all its strengths and for all its admirable qualities, the EU has evolved over 50 years in a direction that no longer suits this country."

"And that is a judgment that you, the people, have now confirmed at the polls."

The Conservative Party leader took charge at Downing Street last year with a "no ifs, no buts" pledge to leave the EU. His General Election campaign pegged around the "Get Brexit Done" message last December won him a thumping majority, after which Britain's exit from the bloc also became a certainty as his Brexit bill easily crossed the parliamentary hurdle.

Acknowledging the long-drawn divorce process and the deep Remain versus Brexit divide within the UK, Johnson said, “Tonight we are leaving the European Union. For many people this is an astonishing moment of hope, a moment they thought would never come and there are many of course who feel a sense of anxiety and loss.

“I understand all those feelings, and our job as the government “ my job “ is to bring this country together now and take us forward.”

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